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ABSTRACT

Research suggests that successful staff development must attend to teachers' affective and humanistic needs. This paper presents strategies for staff development that are based in an affective and humanistic context. The following principles of adult learning are particularly relevant to teacher-staff development: Adults perceive themselves as individuals and as self-reliant; they are more pragmatic than theoretic; they engage in learning to pursue personal goals and objectives; and they are better motivated if they actively participate in the learning process. The following suggestions are made for improving staff development: (1) provide instructional activities that promote proactive development and the maintenance of mental/emotional health (support groups); (2) offer ways to increase teacher governance (quality circles); and (3) offer activities that enhance collegiality (team teaching, cooperative research, joint authorship, and mentoring). For staff development to have a significant and positive impact on teachers, it must be a continuing and integrating process that first attends to personal and human needs, particularly the needs for belonging and recognition of professional status. (LMI)

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TRANSFORMING TEACHER STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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TRANSFORMING TEACHER STAFF DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

An axiom of reform is that there must first be acknowledgement of an existing problem. The creation of worthwhile staff development programs for teachers, therefore, must begin with the realization that typically such programs have been viewed by many teachers as abject failures. Secondly, to be more effective, staff development must also be ensconced in a context that is strongly affective and humanistic. Thirdlly, programs must be based on principles of adult (not child) learning theory. Fourthly, administrators must transfer (or at least share with teachers) the power to manage and plan staff development. Fifthly, staff development activities must be collegial and collaborative. Sixthly, the traditional "one-shot" inservices must be replaced with a program that is continual and integrated with the day-to-day life of teachers. Collectively, these six reform concepts imply a radical or fundamental change in teacher staff development rather than mere modifications or adjustments.

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Educational leaders (administrators, school boards, policymakers) should know, if they do not already, that many teachers reject most typical staff development/inservice with contempt

and ridicule.(22) It has been assailed as "dull, irrelevant, pedestrian, repetitious, unfocused, [and] obvious."(19: 3) Other criticisms include "waste of time, poorly financed, and . . . forced."(3: 8) If such pejoratives truly reflect teachers' feelings about staff development, it probably means that current programs are inefficacious and a waste of scarce resources.

Organizational efforts behind staff development programs are, no doubt, well intentioned. Undeniably, it makes sense that teachers should expand their knowledge, improve their skills and techniques, and be brought up to date on technological innovations. The exclusive focus on this "cognitive domain" of teachers, however, may be a major reason for the failure of many staff development programs.

It seems superficial to assume that teachers, who are dispirited or unmotivated, will give anything more than "lip service" to the call for pedagogical improvement. John Goodlad has stated that new ideas in teaching techniques and subject matter are often ignored by teachers and seldom reach their students. Even in the face of strong public demand for reform, teachers remain resistant.(9) Acceptance and implementation of educational innovations (the usual content of staff development programs) will occur only when teachers are ready and willing to change.(15) This seems to point to the necessity of attending to teachers' affective and humanistic needs--feeling good about being teachers and the capacity to conceptualize themselves

as competent, adult decision-makers. As one observer eloquently stated, "We cannot legitimately continue to expect teachers to leave their person outside the door as they enter the classroom . . . what one knows is important, but how one feels is equally important."(8: 8)

AN AFFECTIVE AND HUMANISTIC CONTEXT

"Affective", as used here, refers to values, feelings, attitudes, emotion, and degree of acceptance or rejection.(12) "Humanistic" not only includes these human conditions but also specifically refers to the inherent capacity and right of people to make choices and decisions.(13)

There is an ironic double standard in the training of teachers and the educating of students. Teachers have long been admonished to attend to their students' affective and humanistic needs--this is important, they are told, for motivation and personal growth and development.(11) In staff development planning, however, the idea that teachers have these same needs, rarely emerges. Clark, Lotto, and Astuto observed that staff development must evolve beyond the isolated dimension of improving teaching skills. They contend that this can best be accomplished by moving toward psychological support and personal reinforcement through teacher-to-teacher collaboration.(7) Other experts envision untapped potential for teachers to learn from one

another, to build trust, and act upon common ideas and problems.(24) Even though translating affective/humanistic elements into staff development programs may be a departure from tradition, it is not an insurmountable challenge.

Proactive development and maintenance of mental and emotional health. One possible approach to affective/humanistic staff development is to provide instruction and activities which foster good mental and emotional health among teachers. Schonfeld identified a number of occupational coping strategies and found that teachers who employed them were less likely to have psychological problems and low morale.(23) Many industries, and perhaps some school systems, now have Employee Assistance Programs. These, however, are mostly remedial in nature and are devoted mainly to problems stemming from drug (including alcohol) use and abuse. A proactive program, in contrast, would be preventative and have a much wider scope. It would provide training in the areas of stress management, conflict resolution, communication skills, values clarification, goal-setting, and various psychotherapies.

Support groups. Related to proactive mental/emotional health efforts is the use of staff development time for the operation of teacher support groups. Alschuler reports that nearly all experts in the area of burnout believe that support groups not only help prevent burnout, but also encourage other constructive behaviors.(1) Such groups provide the opportunity

to express feelings, give and receive support, give encouragement, and to address those factors which contribute to low teacher morale. Also, by nurturing a sense of belonging and fellowship, support groups might help break down the feeling many teachers have, that they are isolated from one another.(18) In order to counter the possible tendency of group sessions degenerating into purely social enterprises, professionals could be brought in to conduct meetings or teachers themselves could be trained in group facilitation.

ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES

Since teachers are not children, their training should not be based on the same pedagogical assumptions. Several adult learning principles are particularly relevant to teacher staff development: independence/self reliance; pragmatism; personal goal orientation; and active learning.(4)

Adults perceive themselves as independent and self-reliant. Lortie has emphasized that teaching, compared to other professions, is an isolated and cellular occupation.(18) Even though self-reliance and independence have some virtue, teachers should be encouraged to "break out of their isolation" and create a "community of learners."(20: 13) This theme of teacher community is central to nearly all of the other reform concepts--affective/humanistic context, teacher empowerment, and collegiality/collaboration.

Adults are more pragmatic than theoretic. Adults are often quick to reject what they perceive as distant or irrelevant theory.(4) Thus, some staff development sessions could show teachers how to practically apply or implement new ideas and techniques. One way to promote transferability to their own classrooms is to have teachers actually develop materials, lesson plans, and methods during inservice sessions.(14)

Adults engage in learning to pursue their own personal goals and objectives. The dominant theme in staff development literature is that programs for teachers should be developed by teachers. At the very least, they should be based on a high degree of teacher input.(14) This seems to reinforce the notion that there are limitations to the ability of administrators to force change upon teachers through the top-down management approach to staff development.

Adults are better motivated by being active participants in the learning process. Training sessions should therefore be activity-oriented rather than didactic in nature. There is a plethora of alternatives to lecture--simulations, role-playing, critical incidents, modeling, and skill-practice exercises.(4) The practice of these techniques by staff developers might also encourage teachers to transfer them to their own classroom situations.

TEACHER GOVERNANCE OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The failure of staff development, in large part, is due to the excluding of teachers from its designing and planning.(14) As an alternative, Jones and Lowe propose a "bottom-up" approach whereby programs are planned and implemented by those teachers affected by them.(14) The rationale is that teachers themselves are the best source of information about their own learning process and that they are more likely to "buy into" a program of their own compared to one imposed upon them.(14) An equally important by-product of this empowerment (from a humanistic standpoint) could be the nurturing of teacher self-conceptualization as competent, responsible, and trusted decision-makers.

Quality circles. One means of empowering teachers in the process of creating and administering staff development programs is the use of "quality circles". A participative management style developed by Ishikiwa at the University of Tokyo, this model is used in over six-thousand American work places.(5; 6)

Quality circles work by having employees, in this case teachers, meeting regularly to identify, analyze, and suggest solutions to major problems or issues. One purpose is to involve staff in planning and implementing in a meaningful way. A second purpose is to open and strengthen communication among workers and between workers and management. Quality circles can also serve as a means of quality control.(5) Employers in the industrial sector report that this management model provides

workers with visibility, recognition, and feelings of self-worth.(6) Quality circles or some similar form of empowerment could also ensure that staff development programs are sensitive to the needs that teachers feel are important.

COLLEGIAL AND COLLABORATIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT

If teachers are given more control over their staff development programs, then it is imperative that teachers function as a team. "Collegiality" is defined as "high levels of collaboration among teachers characterized by mutual respect, shared work values, cooperation, and specific conversation about teaching and learning."(25) Little describes "collaboration" as a working environment in which all teachers not only cooperate with one another, but equally share in the risks, goals, and obligations of a mutually established, overarching school or departmental program.(16) Strikingly similar to the rationale behind quality circles, collegiality and collaboration center attention on significant curricular and instructional problems.

Types of collaborative activities. Baldwin suggests that collaboration among teachers take the form of team teaching, cooperative research, and joint authorship.(2) In the context of staff development, this might mean devoting inservice time to training teachers in these areas. This implies that staff development is not something that just happens several days out of the school year, but that it must be a continual process

which is integrated with other components of the school organization and culture.(10)

Mentoring is another exemplary form of collaboration. "Teachers helping teachers through mentoring programs is fast becoming a preferred staff development procedure."(17) Components of mentoring programs include peer observations, peer coaching and verbal feedback and interchange. If mentoring is used to train teachers in effective teaching and classroom management techniques such as those outlined by Huitt, Segars, and Brophy, it could become a primary method of developing effective instructional leaders.(21)

CLOSING REMARKS

Even though scattered examples of effective staff development programs can probably be cited, implementation of these reforms in their entirety would represent a transformation for most school organizations--a major change. Such a change requires that staff development be given high priority. It would mean that the typical "one-shot" approach could no longer be used as the primary means of seeking staff development outcomes. It has been quite customary for school districts to devote a day or two at the beginning of the school year--orientation--and then deluding themselves that this constitutes staff development. For staff development to have a significant and positive impact on

teachers, it must be a continuing and integrative process. It also means that professional improvement is best achieved by first attending to personal and human needs--the need to belong and the need for a level of power normally accorded to others of professional status. This calls for administrators and teachers alike to become much more serious about staff development.

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